for tackling church-divisive issues when a clear and solid methodology is lacking or has not been developed enough.

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Wolfram Stierle. *Über Leben in planetarischen Grenzen: Plädoyer für eine nachhaltige Entwicklungspolitik* (Living within Planetary Limits: The Case for Sustainable Development Policy). Munich: Oecom Verlag, 2020. 192 pp.

It may be the smallest of the government ministries, but it has the highest demands and has to meet the greatest expectations. Hardly anyone talks about "development aid" anymore. Instead, the focus of Germany's Federal Ministry on Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) is on economic cooperation, but above all sustainable development. The transformation to sustainability, which both poor and rich countries have to achieve – the rich even more so than the poor – sets the agenda of German development policy today.

As head of the Value-Oriented Development Policy department of the BMZ, Wolfram Stierle has published a book that shows how good it is for politics to be capable of both courageous and constructive self-criticism. Stierle steps back from the programmes for which he is jointly responsible in his official capacity in order to subject them to critical evaluation.

In the background of this critical review of government development policy in Germany are the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by the United Nations in 2015, to be achieved globally by 2030. The BMZ has declared that it wants to contribute to this success. As honourable as such an undertaking may seem, the question is whether development policy is not overstretching itself. To better recognize what can realistically be achieved and where one's efforts should be concentrated, Stierle suggests that a critical self-limitation of development policy is urgently needed.

Above all, Stierle, who is a theologian as well as an economist, stresses in his book the need for sustainable development policy to include competence in religion and values, given that the vast majority of people in the global South not only profess a religious affiliation, but derive their life energy and their action-guiding convictions from it.

Stierle vigorously confronts the need for the paradigm shift in the understanding of development called for by the SDGs, leaving no doubt that this is necessary. The SDGs commit all countries to radical changes in their policies, albeit in different ways. As far as environmental sustainability is concerned, the industrialized countries are much further behind than the so-called underdeveloped countries. Development policy can no longer be about development aid. "Development," according to the SDGs, no longer primarily concerns others. The demands associated with development are directed just as much at one's own situation. Sustainable development therefore also requires a different, sustainable development policy. What should this policy look like? This is the central question of this book, as its subtitle ("The Case for Sustainable Development Policy") indicates.

Stierle begins with the "long history of criticism" that has accompanied German development policy since its inception in the 1960s. It shows that not only is the old paradigm of development aid highly problematic, but also the emphasis on cooperation and partnership has failed to overcome the asymmetry between developed and underdeveloped,

helping and needing, giving and taking countries. The Eurocentric nature of development thinking cannot be denied, bound up with the teleology of history from the European Enlightenment. The "post-development" approaches want to escape this, but have not yet succeeded in doing so on the political stage.

The question is not whether sustainable development is needed but whether and how development policy can contribute to it. Can state development policy lead to transformation? Can politics do that at all – organize the global societal shift toward sustainable ecological and economic, social and cultural development? What form would such a policy have to take? Who is responsible for it?

Stierle follows up the section on the long history of criticism of previous development policy with a much more fundamental criticism. He addresses the contradictions in the objectives and strategies of development policy, the questions for which no satisfactory answers are in sight. How, for example, is the demand for economic growth to be reconciled with the demand for the preservation of the natural basis of life? How can poverty be measured? Does globalization make people rich or poor? How does democracy promotion actually work? Why do human rights still appear as a Western-imperial threat? Is external aid, even if it declares itself as "help for self-help," not fundamentally problematic? There are no easy answers to any of these questions.

The paradigm shift that the SDGs demand of development policy is fundamental, and the transformation they call for is highly complex. No area of state policy can shoulder this task alone; indeed, the question is whether state policy will reach its limits. It is important to see this. Politics is not the whole, and not everything is politics. If politics wants to maintain the claim of transformation toward sustainability, and it should do so, then it must go beyond itself. The transformation that it has set out to achieve needs more than politics! It needs values, it needs ethics, and, above all, it needs religion.

The "competencies" that Stierle demands of development policy are therefore primarily not those of goal-oriented acting, conceptualizing, and organizing. Instead, he provokes a reflection on the social and cultural conditions under which development strategies operate. It is important to see that every development policy measure has ambivalent consequences. When it comes to transformation toward sustainability, we are always asked about our ideas of life, our attitudes toward life, whether we ourselves are willing to change our behaviour in the various areas of life.

Stierle sees the greatest need to catch up in "religious and value competence" if there is to be a sustainable development policy. Development policy needs to become capable of making judgments about religion and values, because religious agencies are also ambivalent in their social and cultural effects, and their values are highly fluid. Based on a competent religious value judgment, however, development policy should then be able to win religious actors as possible cooperation partners in achieving the goals of sustainable development.

In this context, Stierle points out that in 2016, on the initiative of the German development minister Gerd Müller, the BMZ set up a Religion and Development department and awards research contracts to increase knowledge and insights. In addition, the international network Partnership on Religion and Sustainable Development (PaRD), which is now operating globally, was established under the leadership of the BMZ. PaRD has set itself the goal of bringing government policy into dialogue with civil society and religious development actors and facilitating joint projects.

Sustainable development policy, as Stierle's critical study concludes, requires an understanding of its limitations. Sustainable development policy is dependent on the consideration of factors and cooperation with actors that lie beyond the competence and influence of state policy. It lives from preconditions that are not within its own power to create. Above all, these relate to the formation of values and world views, of moral attitudes and

convictions, as they occur in religious, moral, and ideological socialization, communication, and interaction.

The importance of religious, moral, and ideological convictions is not only to be found in the countries of the global South, as Stierle points out. There, however, it is obvious that the vast majority of people not only profess their religious affiliation, but also derive their life energy and their convictions from it to guide their actions. A value-oriented development policy, if it is to be pursued in cooperation with the people on the ground, must therefore include the religious communities at the forefront.

The talk of secular societies in which religion, as is often claimed, has lost its formative power in the formation of values and consciousness of meaning, however, urgently requires correction with regard to the German and European context. Corresponding to the idea of "multiple modernities," one could also speak of "multiple secularities." The ties to the traditional religious institutions, the mainstream churches above all, have undoubtedly become weak. This does not mean, however, that the value and production of meaning that they have handed down has lost its social relevance. Moreover, the religious dimensions and potentials in the commitment of the ecological and human rights movements cannot be overlooked. Many of the criteria for sustainable development that have been incorporated into the SDGs have, as Stierle repeatedly points out, long been discussed in the ecumenical movement and formulated as globally differentiated challenges. A value-oriented, sustainable development policy is everywhere dependent on both critical discourse and constructive cooperation with religious actors and their more or less secularly defined partners.

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